

Best Practice

Economic Development Leadership

CONTACT

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THE PRACTICE

The Town of Shellbrook, through various sub-committees, has actively pursued economic development opportunities for the town and surrounding area.

THE PROCESS

Early in 2005, town council and a number of citizens in the community realized there was a need to take a proactive approach to promote economic development in the region. The town provided the funding needed to get the process started. Initially, an economic development committee (EDC) was created as a subcommittee of the local business improvement district (BID). The EDC implemented some strategies in an effort to promote economic development. These strategies focused on promoting the Town of Shellbrook as an attractive community for new residents and business.

After 2 years of operating in this fashion, it became evident the EDC needed to be a direct committee of council and in 2008 that change was made. The EDC made the decision to hire a part-time economic development professional to assist with further developing the strategic plan. The economic development professional helped create a town profile for marketing purposes at trade shows in Saskatchewan and Alberta, created a town website for marketing and tourism purposes, and assisted the town to successfully acquire land for additional growth. The economic development professional attended council meetings to provide updates and progress on the work to date.

The economic development professional aggressively pursued new business ventures on behalf of the community. In certain cases, the economic development professional has worked with council to offer tax incentives for new businesses or residents re-locating to the community. Although the mandate of the economic development professional is directed by council, the individual has approached council with some unique ideas which have been implemented as part of the mandate (for example, the town website was redesigned with a focus to serve potential new businesses and residents, not just existing residents).

THE RESULTS

To date, there has been unprecedented growth in the community with 20 plus new housing starts in 2008 and slightly less than 20 housing starts in 2007. Trade show participation and "hits" to the website have created many inquiries from people throughout western Canada and some have either acquired property or have moved to the community.

LESSONS LEARNED

The Town of Shellbrook believes that, due to the efforts of the committee and economic development professional, that a positive environment for business and residential growth has been implemented. Seeking outside expertise allowed the town to finally achieve the goal they wanted to position themselves for growth.